

## CHAPTER IV

### VALUES

#### a. *Good company*

829 ONE of the values most constantly stressed by the Nyakyusa is  
876 that of *akwangala* which, in its primary sense, means 'the enjoy-  
521 ment of good company' and, by extension, the mutual aid and  
515 sympathy which spring from personal friendship. It implies ur-  
bane manners and a friendliness which expresses itself in eating  
and drinking together; not only merry conversation, but also dis-  
cussion between equals, which the Nyakyusa regard as the prin-  
ciple form of education. 'It is by conversing with our friends',  
said one of our witnesses, 'that we gain wisdom (*amahala*); it is  
bad to sit quite still in men's company. A man who does this is a  
fool; he learns no wisdom, he has only his own thoughts. More-  
over, a man who does not spend time with other people is always  
dirty, he does not compare himself with any friends. For we  
learn cleanliness of body in company, those who are dirty learn-  
ing from their more cleanly friends. Again, if a man is accused of  
some crime and brought before the chief and is unable to defend  
himself easily and with eloquence we mock at him and say: "What  
is the matter with you? Do you live all by yourself? How is it that  
you are so foolish?" Wisdom and cleanliness are the two great  
things to be learnt in company. It is bad to live alone far from  
other people, such a man learns nothing; he never learns to  
express himself well, to converse wittily with friends, or to argue  
a case with eloquence. It is better to live with other people.'

829 'To live with other people', says our informant, but he implies  
876 'to live with contemporaries'. For *akwangala*, in the sense of dis-  
cussion and easy give-and-take, can never occur between men  
and women, and is made difficult between men of different gen-  
erations by the respect required of sons for their fathers. Since  
men are held to acquire manners, eloquence, and wisdom only  
in company it is necessary, the Nyakyusa argue, that they should  
build in villages, rather than in scattered homesteads, and since

829 *ukwangala* is only possible between contemporaries<sup>1</sup> they must  
● 876 build with contemporaries. The value set on *ukwangala* is thus  
related to the age-village; male contemporaries build together,  
and the company of, and good fellowship with, his age-mates is  
what creates a man of wisdom and character. Such is the Nyak-  
yusa view of society.

576 For conversation to flow merrily and discussion to be profound  
264 there must be *ifyakwangalela*—'the wherewithal for good fellow-  
ship', that is, food and drink—and very great stress is laid on  
572 sharing these. Men and boys are expected to eat regularly with  
age-mates. Traditionally, fathers and sons never ate or drank  
together—to do so was held to be incompatible with the respect  
due from son to father—and men sought the company of equals  
at meals. From the time a small boy begins to herd he is encour-  
aged to bring home two or three friends to eat with him, and in  
turn he visits each of them. Since boys have no fields of their own  
until they marry, but co-operate in cultivation with their parents,  
it is to their own mothers they go for food, and parents are proud  
of a son bringing many friends. 'Perhaps', said Angombwike, 'a  
son will come with his friends and cut a huge bunch of bananas,  
and take thick milk and eat with them. When the father comes  
back his wives will tell him: "Your son has eaten all the thick  
milk and cut a banana bunch!" Then he will ask: "How many  
men were with my son?" "Six!" "Ah, he's a chief!" the old man  
will say, smiling proudly.' 'And formerly if a young man came  
[561] home often alone to eat, his father would beat him, or even take a  
spear and wound him, and when people asked why he would say:  
"This great fool comes alone to my place, again and again." It is  
good to eat with friends, for boys to go round in groups of four  
or five.'

264 After marriage each man is cooked for by his own wife, but he  
562 continues to eat with his friends, bringing them to his home or  
going to their's. The first wife to come to a young men's village  
574 is said to have a hard life. 'She has to draw water and cook for  
all the young men of the village—they come to drink, and to  
wash, and they beat her with a stick if she refuses them. No, the

<sup>1</sup> *Ukwangala* is sometimes used with reference to relatives as well as to village-  
mates, as in the phrase '*atikwangala amunu nabakumu kake*', meaning 'he is not  
on good terms with his relatives'; but in its fullest sense it can only be used with  
reference to contemporaries.